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General Assembly
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Official Records

5th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 23 September 2014, 5 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa ..... (Uganda)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Phipps (United States), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.

World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

Agenda item 65 (*continued*)

Rights of indigenous peoples

High-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I am Jan Eliasson. I am the Deputy Secretary-General, and I send warm greetings from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has been closely following the historic World Conference on Indigenous People, together with me and all our colleagues. We welcome representatives warmly to New York to this important meeting.

The first three words of the Charter of the United Nations, which I always carry in my pocket, is "We the peoples". And even if we are an organization of States working under intergovernmental rules, we must never forget that we are here to serve the peoples — peoples who deserve peace, development, human rights, the rule of law and a life of dignity.

I have followed the fates of indigenous peoples throughout my life and my career, and I am extremely happy to see their representatives in this Hall. It was a bumpy ride to get to this Conference, but now the representatives are assembled here, and I am very glad that they have succeeded in coming together on an outcome document (resolution 69/2) that sets the direction ahead.

But the work has just begun. We have a long way to go, and we should hurry up on that road. We hope that when representatives go back to their home countries and environments and to all their friends at home, they will carry the torch and take with them the best of this meeting and of the common experiences that representatives have shared. I think this meeting offers a huge possibility for networking, allowing representatives to also see the collective strength of reaching out to their colleagues and friends in other parts of the world. I want representatives to know that we are their partners, that we want to stand up for every human being's equal value in the world, and that they have been left behind for far too long.

I will now move on to my formal speech. That was my introduction. I am very glad to be in this Hall at this moment. I am also very grateful that representatives could hear my remarks now because I have a number of other meetings. As representatives know, we have a meeting of huge importance for them — the climate meeting. And I am going back to it after this introduction.

This Conference builds on the work done and the results achieved since the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples seven years ago.

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That Declaration is our foundation and guiding star. The Conference outcome document is our inspiration and path ahead. Working together, indigenous peoples and Member States have identified important priorities and necessary actions on issues such as land, resources, justice systems, education, health and development — areas that affect the daily life of all the people concerned.

I am very much a human rights advocate, and human rights are at the core of our efforts. I am especially pleased that the outcome document focuses on indigenous women, youth and persons with disabilities. I commend all representatives for their tireless work and for finalizing this very positive and forward-looking text. I am from Sweden. I once worked for a Prime Minister who said that every society should be judged by how it deals with the most vulnerable and exposed of its peoples, as that is how one can gauge the quality of life of a society. We should keep this in mind.

Today, I hope, we will celebrate the achievements of this unprecedented Conference. But we will also be remembering that, globally, indigenous peoples continue to lag behind in terms of education, health, employment and, sadly, even life expectancy, as statistics can prove. The Secretary-General and I intend to deal with those problems by building on the momentum representatives have generated already, for which we are extremely grateful. We can sense the momentum in this Hall, what the representatives have given to the city of New York, and the fact that this meeting at the United Nations coincides with so many other meetings bringing world leaders to this city and this country.

We want to engage the indigenous peoples even more actively across the United Nations system. The United Nations is now in the middle of identifying, as many representatives know, our global development priorities beyond 2015. We are now in the end phase of the Millennium Development Goals era, and we have approximately 450 days left to achieve those eight Goals. Sadly enough, we will not achieve several of the Goals. We will now identify the new set of goals. It is essential, in my view, that the issues of indigenous peoples are part of the new agenda. That agenda should support their broader aspirations and those of representatives for sustainable development, in line with their rights and priorities.

The future we want values and seeks to preserve diversity. The future we want requires more equitable and sustainable use of the world's resources. We need to be at peace with nature. I have mediated in conflicts, I have been in humanitarian crisis situations, but what I really would like to do is to attend a negotiation on peace with nature. It is difficult, though, to see who will sit on the other side of the table. I am sure many of the representatives in this Hall could represent the side of nature in the negotiations. Finally, the future we want is one where all indigenous peoples realize their human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 should be obligatory reading in every school around the world. It opens up both the beauty of the individual's political and civil rights and also economic and social rights.

In closing, the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples shows what we can do when we unite, not only as Member States, but also as "We the peoples". Nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something. Let us never forget that. And let us remember that the United Nations is a reflection of two realities. The United Nations is a reflection of the world as it is, and it is not a pretty place. We have conflicts. We have inequalities. We have poverty. We have violations of human rights.

So that is one reality — the world as it is. But the United Nations is also a reflection of the world as it should be, and our job is, for all of us in this room and for all of us who serve this Organization and who serve the peoples of the world, to diminish the gap between the world as it is and the world as it should be. We will not be able to bridge the gap, unfortunately — let us be realistic — but we can diminish it, even if only by an inch. Again, everybody can do something.

Now it is our collective responsibility, as Member States, indigenous peoples, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, civil society, the private sector and the academic world, to transform the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295) into reality. That requires determination, tenacity, the appropriate legal framework, human and institutional capacities, and, finally, political will. As the Assembly heard Al Gore say this morning, political will is a renewable resource. We can renew, strengthen and even double the political will that is needed.

Participants here today are the catalysts, bearers and witnesses of this process, and I count on them, as partners with the United Nations, to deal with a better future for all in this world. We need to work for a life of dignity for all. A life of dignity for all is the theme of

the Secretary-General's report on the post-2015 process (A/68/202), and we should keep that in mind. I thank them all for their attention, their work and the work that they will do. We are in this together. Let us go to work.

The Acting President: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his statement.

As previously announced, the Assembly will now hear presentations by the co-chairs of interactive round table discussions 1, 2 and 3 and the interactive panel discussion.

I give the floor to Mr. Ghazali Ohorella, representative of the Pacific indigenous region and co-chair of interactive round table discussion 1.

Mr. Ohorella: Yesterday we were served with a delicious discourse provided by States, indigenous peoples and United Nations agencies, programmes and funds. It was a luau feast of liberation and freedom.

In the Pacific, we know that one can paddle over great distances when many paddles are moving together. If we continue in this spirit, our work will no longer seem impossible but, as I said in my opening statement, rather inevitable. I had the pleasure of co-chairing the session with Mrs. Edita Hrdá, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic, with a panel that consisted of Ms. Victoria Tauli Corpuz, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; Mr. Atencio López, representative of the Central and South American and Caribbean region; and Mr. Kanayo Nwanze, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development as keynote speakers, with a large number of indigenous participants, United Nations agencies and Member States.

A consistent refrain during the discussion was that the new collective consciousness can close the chasm and ensure that indigenous peoples do not slip through the cracks at the United Nations. Various participants underlined that the World Conference on indigenous Peoples and its outcome document (resolution 69/2) marked a milestone for the United Nations system's work with indigenous peoples on issues that affect them. There was broad consensus that, with the adoption of the World Conference's outcome document, the time has come for the United Nations system to move from normative discussions on indigenous peoples' issues to action and the integration of indigenous peoples in the United Nations work at all levels.

Participants also stressed the importance of indigenous peoples' full and equal participation in the United Nations system. They provided examples of how this could be done through, first, ensuring indigenous peoples' participation in various decision-making governance structures at the local, national, regional and international levels; secondly, recognizing indigenous peoples' governments and high-level officials by providing adequate United Nations status; and, thirdly, ensuring that there are United Nations staff members with indigenous backgrounds.

In line with the outcome document, several speakers called for the appointment of a senior indigenous United Nations official at the level of Under-Secretary-General to oversee the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295) and to raise awareness of indigenous peoples' issues within the United Nations system and beyond.

A key focus of several speakers was the United Nations system's work on indigenous peoples at the regional and national levels. The participants heard examples of how regional and national United Nations mechanisms, including the regional commissions and the United Nations country teams, can ensure that indigenous peoples are part of the development and strategizing of programmes and activities in a structured and coherent manner, including in the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, and by using the United Nations Development Group's "Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues" and ensuring the availability of relevant disaggregated data.

Numerous speakers also committed to fully supporting a system-wide action plan to ensure a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the Declaration, and we look forward to the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly at its seventieth session.

Recommendations were made on establishing the oversight mechanism as a monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the Declaration. Some speakers called for the establishment of a new United Nations mechanism tasked with overseeing the Declaration's implementation, while others referred to updating existing ones and strengthening the work of the United Nations treaty bodies on indigenous peoples' issues.

The call to strengthen the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues was another key point of discussion. Speakers alluded to the need for the Support Group to become more effective through more

frequent meetings with higher-level United Nations officials.

We recognize a new era of empowerment and engagement, moving beyond what is wrong to what we want for our world as we work together. We are already walking forward towards ensuring our fundamental freedoms, and we recognize the wisdom of calling for indigenous ambassadors. We welcome the presence and participation of the newly appointed United States Ambassador to the Human Rights Council and Cherokee native, Mr. Keith Harper.

It is clear that when indigenous peoples hold their lands in their own hands, this will lead to a realization of their rights. Indigenous peoples must be the protagonists of their own development processes and responsible for the measurement of their own progress. Indigenous peoples are the canary in the coal mine of the world. We are the mercury in the barometer of the successes and failures of the United Nations. The round table offered us a map to the stars where we can realize the dreams of our ancestors. In fact, we see the pledges and promises as providing action. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's closing words yesterday morning were: "You will always have a home at the United Nations".

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. David Choquehuanca Céspedes, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and co-chair of interactive round table discussion 2.

Mr. Choquehuanca Céspedes (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I greet the Assembly today by saying "Jayaya", which, in Quechua, means "To life!"

I am sorry for the delay in this wrap-up meeting. Indeed, we should learn from our indigenous brothers and sisters that when a lawyer makes an appointment with an indigenous woman at 3 p.m., she will show up at 2.45 p.m., and the lawyer will show up at 4 p.m. We should learn something from our indigenous brothers and sisters.

I am going to present a summary of the work of round table 2 on the implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples at the national and local levels. Round table 2 was held on Monday, 22 September 2014, from 3 to 6 p.m. The round table focused on the implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples at the national and local levels.

In their presentations, several States reaffirmed their support for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Many participants also welcomed the final document and made note of the specific commitments regarding the measures to be adopted by States and the United Nations to strengthen the implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples at the national and local levels.

At the same time, some participants raised the concern that some issues were not reflected in the final document. Both Member States and indigenous representatives stated that there had been progress at the national level in the implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples, including the recognition of indigenous peoples and their rights in national constitutions, laws, policies and programmes. The identified examples covered a number of rights, including the rights to self-determination and autonomy, lands, territories and natural resources, consultation and free, prior and informed consent, education and indigenous languages, health, rights-based treaties and reconciliation. Examples of positive measures varied among States.

While many notable advances were identified, participants also addressed the current challenges in the implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples across a range of issues and rights. Comments focused on how to overcome the ongoing challenges. Several speakers referred to the need for an ongoing dialogue between Governments and indigenous peoples. In that regard, it was noted that the participation of indigenous peoples in parliaments and other political bodies has been substantial, but that much remains to be done to strengthen such participation at the national and local levels. Member States and indigenous representatives also referred to the importance of the development of action plans and policies relating to indigenous peoples and noted that the commitment in the final document in that respect is a positive step.

Several participants referred to the need for wider awareness among governmental actors, media and society in general in order to change discriminatory attitudes and prejudices against indigenous peoples in the societies in which they live. Those are obstacles to the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples. The issue of violence against women and girls and the need for concerted action by States and the United Nations to address it was also highlighted by several participants.

Beyond the action and the current challenges at national and local levels, participants in the round table also addressed the role of the United Nations system in promoting the implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples and the measures which could taken to strengthen their implementation. The provisions of the final document referring to the participation of indigenous representatives in the United Nations were noted with appreciation by the Member States and indigenous representatives. In addition, several participants noted paragraphs of the final document as to the measures to use, modify and improve the mechanisms of the United Nations in order to achieve the purposes of the Declaration.

In conclusion, I would ask that we all — representatives of States, representatives of indigenous peoples, indigenous leaders, political leaders who are participating in this important meeting — bring our energy to the task of ensuring that the rights of indigenous peoples are implemented and, if possible, strengthened, and ensuring that the United Nations works hard towards this end. Each of us has positive energy that can be used for this purpose.. I am going to repeat,

(*spoke in Quechua*)

Jayaya!

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I would like all of us — because each one of us has energy — to push collectively for what the United Nations, our States and our indigenous leaders are doing. We must join with them and support them — and not crush their action. We must support it and push for it. I say once again "Jayaya" because it means "to life". Everything that indigenous people are doing is for life, brothers and sisters. Life comes first — everyone's life, not just the life of human beings, but of everything that exists in Pachamama, our Mother Earth. "Jayaya, brothers and sisters!"

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Ms. Jannie Lasimbang, representative of the Asia Indigenous Region and Chair of the interactive panel discussion.

Ms. Lasimbang: I have the honour of presenting a short summary of the panel discussion on indigenous priorities for the post-2015 sustainable development agenda which I co-chaired with Ms. Patricia Balbuena, Vice-Minister for Interculturality of Peru. We had three panel speakers, Mr. Wo Hongbo, from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Ms. Saudata Aboubacrine, representative of the African Indigenous Region, and Mr. Albert Deterville, from the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Despite our long list of speakers, we managed to hear from almost all of them in the panel discussion, thanks to their sticking to the three-minute time limit.

I will be brief. I am just going to present some bullet points on the discussion and the conclusions that we have reached.

Among the important aspects that are necessary with respect to indigenous peoples and their priorities in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda is to secure the adequate inclusion of the rights of indigenous peoples in the post-2015 development agenda. The rights enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should be the basis for their inclusion. Indigenous peoples should participate actively in the development of policies and programmes and in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda at the national and international levels. Specific indicators on indigenous peoples should be included in that agenda. It is not enough to simply add them to the list of vulnerable groups.

In order to achieve sustainable development, it is imperative to be respectful of indigenous peoples' development according to their own aspirations and to be respectful of their cultures and identities. The post-2015 development agenda should also reflect what Member States agreed at this World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, in particular what we have committed to in the outcome document (resolution 69/2), that is, respect for the rights of indigenous peoples, including indigenous knowledge to sustain the environment and to combat climate change.

It is also very important to recognize the rights to lands, territories and resources, the right to self-determination and the principle of free, prior and informed consent as some of the main pillars for achieving sustainable development for indigenous peoples. The participation of indigenous youth, women and persons with disabilities should be guaranteed in any process related to development, and the human-rights-based approach to development should be incorporated in the post-2015 development agenda.

Other points were brought up by the speakers, including the need to develop specific indicators

on indigenous peoples' well-being in the post-2015 development agenda. Some speakers pointed out that the data with respect to indigenous peoples shows that they are lagging behind in many aspects and that it is necessary to take action to improve their situation. Development should therefore be according to their own aspirations and needs.

Another point made was that there cannot be development if indigenous peoples' rights are not included. It is difficult to talk about the development of indigenous peoples if, on a daily basis, they become victims of displacement from their lands and their territories.

Those brief and salient points summarize what was discussed during our panel discussion.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Ms. Joan Carling, representative of the Asia Indigenous Region and co-chair of interactive round table discussion 3.

Ms. Carling: First of all, I feel privileged to have co-chaired round table 3 with Mr. Pita Sharples of New Zealand. During round table 3, on the theme of indigenous peoples' lands, territories and resources, representatives made statements on the following subjects.

First, indigenous peoples have a close relationship with their lands, territories and resources. It constitutes the heart of their collective survival and development and is linked to the survival of their identity and spiritual and cultural well-being. Indigenous peoples' relationship to their lands, territories and resources is outlined in various articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295) and in various paragraphs of the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (resolution 69/2). However, speakers pointed out that there is a lack of recognition of indigenous peoples' lands, territories and resources and a lack of recognition of indigenous peoples in general.

The second point concerns the action of States and United Nations agencies. Some States have legally recognized indigenous peoples' collective land rights and have taken measures to protect sacred sites and heritage areas. There are also efforts to provide compensation for lands, territories and resources taken away from indigenous peoples.

The third point has to do with the implementation of United Nations agencies' programmes that address indigenous peoples' sustainable resource management of lands, territories and resources and food resources and with the enhancement of biodiversity and food security. Those lands, territories and resources are threatened. Indigenous peoples have now reached a tipping point in their continuing collective survival as distinct peoples, along with their distinct identities and cultural heritage, due to dispossession, destruction, militarization and continuing threats to their lands, territories and resources.

Colonization has affected indigenous peoples' guardianship of their lands, territories and resources. For many decades, those issues have been the primary and most urgent concern for indigenous peoples. In many instances, national laws allow for the occupation of indigenous peoples' lands, territories and resources, and that has led to forced evictions, land-grabbing, concession permits for timber plantations and mining and other extractive industries and the delineation of national parks and protected areas without the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples. The continuing violation of the principle of free, prior and informed consent in relation to lands, territories and resources is causing more poverty, marginalization and conflicts.

Finally, there is the call for action. First, there must be legal security for the lands, territories and resources of indigenous peoples as a precondition to achieving sustainable development, and that includes the protection of their traditional occupations, livelihoods and sustainable resource management systems. Partnerships are needed between indigenous peoples and Governments at the global and national levels. The principle of free, prior and informed consent must be immediately implemented, on the basis of the Declaration and the World Conference outcome document. There must be compensation and redress for lands illegally taken from indigenous peoples and regulation of corporations that are violating indigenous peoples' rights to their lands, territories and resources.

States are called upon to immediately establish independent and impartial processes to adjudicate and advance indigenous peoples' rights over their lands, territories, waters and natural resources, as reflected in the outcome document. States were called upon to take measures, including legislative measures, to implement the rights enshrined in the Declaration. There is an

urgent need to protect the remaining traditional grazing lands, hunting grounds, fishing waters, including coastal waters, and gathering areas, and to give priority to laws pertaining to lands, waters, territories and resources. The same recommendation applies to the commitment to develop and implement national action plans aimed at implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Acting President: I should now like to consult members with a view to giving the floor to Mr. Setareki Macanawai, Indigenous Disabilities Representative. If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, and without setting a precedent, to invite Mr. Setareki Macanawai, Indigenous Disabilities Representative, to make a statement at this meeting?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Mr. Macanawai.

Mr. Macanawai: I am speaking today on behalf of the Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network and the Global Disability Caucus, a Network representing indigenous persons with disabilities from all seven geopolitical regions of the indigenous peoples. At this juncture I wish to thank the President of the General Assembly for the opportunity to address this forum to be the voice of the voiceless.

Those of us who have been at the margins of society for a long time have been excluded and forgotten at the closing this historic conference. Indigenous persons with disabilities face multiple types of discrimination and barriers to participation in society, including with regard to access to development programmes and funding, education, employment, health care communication and transport services. As indigenous persons with disabilities, we are overrepresented among those living in absolute poverty, and we continue to exist as one of the world's most vulnerable populations.

It is for that reason that we, both the Global Disabilities Network and the Global Disability Caucus, applaud Member States for adopting the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous People (resolution 69/2), which includes vital references to indigenous persons with disabilities in paragraphs 9, 10 and 18. The inclusion of indigenous persons with disabilities in legislation programmes, disaggregation of data by disability status and a commitment to the elimination of violence and discrimination are key challenges faced by us indigenous people with disabilities today. The participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities should be central to policymaking, programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation of mechanisms addressing the rights of indigenous people.

Only an inclusive and empowered society will ensure that no one is left behind. The commitment by Member States, enshrined in the outcome document, to ensure that national legislative forces and institutional structures relating to indigenous peoples are inclusive of indigenous persons with disabilities is indeed a strong step forward and in the right direction in recognizing and promoting those rights. The development of the rights of indigenous persons with disabilities means that decisions are not taken without our full consultation and participation through our representative organizations. That development must also be in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

I would like to stress again the importance of a stand-alone paragraph on indigenous persons with disabilities in the outcome document. I call for the disaggregation of data on disability status, which is currently recognized in the work leading to the post-2015 development agenda. In the new development agenda, in the new world that we are building, indigenous people and persons with disabilities must be included. To ensure that and to guarantee that we are not left behind once again, the future development goals, targets and indicators must be inclusive of indigenous peoples and indigenous persons with disabilities.

I close with the words of Desmond Tutu: "My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together."

The Acting President: I will now read out a statement on behalf of His Excellency Sam Kahamba Kutesa, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

> "As we come to the closing meeting of the historic World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, I am heartened to note the critical successes of this Conference, which would not have been possible without the inclusive way in which indigenous peoples of the world and Member States approached these discussions.

"At the outset, I would like to extend my deep appreciation to all Conference participants for their valuable contributions, including Heads of State and Government, Member State delegations, indigenous elders, representatives of tribal governments and indigenous organizations, United Nations system representatives and civil society. Without your active engagement and commitment to this endeavour, the Conference surely would not have yielded such positive results.

"Yesterday's adoption by the General Assembly of the outcome document (resolution 69/2) signified a new chapter in the ongoing dialogue and engagement between indigenous peoples and Member States. It will serve as a guiding document going forward, building on the commitments the international community previously made in the foundation document, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"There have been many outcomes from United Nations conferences, but this document is unique because of the inclusive way in which indigenous peoples and Member States turned their shared goals into a reality. Indigenous peoples insisted on such an inclusive process from the very beginning, and thanks to our collective efforts, we successfully met that aspiration. It was this inclusive approach that has made this Conference a success.

"The outcome document represents a balance between what indigenous peoples sought as further commitments towards more effective realization of their rights and what Member States could agree upon. I am convinced that its action-oriented provisions, when implemented, will bring about sweeping changes for current and future generations of indigenous peoples.

"The outcome document accords importance to national actions plans and to a system-wide action plan for greater coherence within the United Nations system. The document also focuses on the rights of indigenous women and addresses the intractable problem of violence against women, which must be at the top of the agenda. The document speaks eloquently to the challenges faced by indigenous youth, the difficulty in sustaining indigenous languages, the need to preserve indigenous knowledge and the requirement to ensure sustainable livelihoods. All those issues form the core of the broad and integrated agenda which indigenous people have called for over the last two decades.

"In the round-table discussions, speakers stressed the vital importance of implementing the provisions of the Declaration. Let me echo that call to action. Within the framework of the emerging development paradigm, Member States, the United Nations system, civil society and the private sector must join in a collective endeavour to make a difference for indigenous peoples worldwide.

"I wish to thank the four advisers to the President who facilitated this conference. The unwavering commitment and determination shown by Ambassador Andrej Logar of Slovenia, Ambassador Marjon Kamara of Liberia, and the two indigenous advisers, Mr. Les Malezer and Ms. Mirna Cunningham, were exemplary. As we conclude this Conference here today, I urge each and every one of you to do your part to keep the momentum of our discussions moving forward in a positive and productive manner. The signing of the outcome document is a pivotal moment for our work and should stand as a beacon of our renewed commitment to ensuring the inclusion of indigenous issues in the future work of the United Nations."

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pita Sharples, Minister of Maori Affairs of New Zealand, who will deliver the closing prayer for this high-level meeting.

Mr. Sharples (New Zealand): I should note that I have just resigned from the New Zealand Government as Minister of Maori Affairs, so this is probably my last official act as Minister, but perhaps I can come back next year to do the prayer.

To all those who were present at the meetings I co-chaired, and whom I asked to hurry up, stop speaking and all those things, I promise I will take less than three minutes. Let us pray.

We thank you for your presence and your blessings upon us throughout this Conference. It is now with some humility that we ask for your guidance to advance this venture, to protect and promote the rights of indigenous persons within their respective nations to confront their challenges and meet those who would put barriers in their way. Where there is darkness, bring light; where there is ignorance, bring understanding; where there is arrogance, bring humility, so that indigenous persons can walk free and tall in their own cultural norms, and

participate fully in the life of their nations. And as we return home, we ask for your blessings so that we may be happily reunited with our families awaiting us.

The Acting President: The high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples is now ended. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 65.

The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.